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REMARKS

Claims 2, 3, 5-7, 10, 12, 16, 19, 26-34, and 36 remain pending in this application for which applicants seek reconsideration.

Amendment

Claim 1 has been canceled, and claims 2, 3, 5-7, 16, 26-30, 32, and 34 have been amended to more clearly set forth the invention, namely adding or deleting certain features or changing the dependency. Claim 5, 7, and 16 have been placed in independent form. Claims 2, 3, 26, 30, and 32 have been amended to change their dependency. No new matter has been introduced.

Allowable Claims

Claims 7, 10, 12, 16, and 19 were indicated to be allowable if they are placed in independent form. Claims 7 and 16 have been placed in independent form. Although claims 7 and 16 do not incorporate every feature of intervening claims 3, 5, and 6, applicants submit that claims 7 and 16, as presently amended, clearly distinguish over the applied references. Thus, at least claims 7, 10, 12, 16, and 19 are still believed to be in condition for allowance. As claims 26 and 27 now ultimately depend from claim 16, they too are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Art Rejection

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Krumholz (USP 6,404,132). Claims 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Krumholz in view of Ferrell (USP 5,618,102). Claims 26 and 27 were rejected under § 103(a) as unpatentable over Krumholz in view of Rodgers (USP 5,900,678). Finally, claims 28-34 and 36 were rejected under § 103(a) as unpatentable over Hayami (USPGP 2002/0163794) in view of Ferrell.

Applicants believe that only independent claims 5 and 28, and the claims depending therefrom are presently at issue. Applicants traverse the rejections of original claims 5 and 29 (which is now partly incorporated in claim 28) because the combination would not have taught the features set forth therein.

Independent claim 5 calls for the plasma lamp to have first and second electrodes. As presently claimed, the second electrode is substantially annular and spaced from the first electrode, and the first electrode is positioned substantially centrally of the second electrode so

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that streamers from the plasma lamp bridge the spacing between the first electrode and the second electrode.

As Krumholz simply would not have disclosed or taught the claimed plasma lamp configuration, the examiner relied upon Ferrell for the proposition that providing two electrodes at opposite ends thereof is well known. Even if the combination were deemed proper for argument's sake, the combination still would not have taught a plasma lamp having an second electrode. The applied references, namely Hayami and Rodgers also would not have alleviated the deficiencies of Krumholz and Ferrell.

Independent claim 28, which incorporate part of claim 29, calls for a sensor for detecting a predetermined condition and a control unit for controlling lighting effect of the plasma lamp based on an output of the sensor. As presently claimed, the control unit in one mode charges the first electrode to disperse the streamers and in another mode charges the first electrode while grounding the second electrode to generate more focused streamers.

In rejecting claims 28-34 and 36, the examiner alleges that providing a multiple-electrode plasma lamp and controlling the multiple lamp operation depending on the vehicle operation condition would have been obvious. Applicants disagree with the examiner's assessment because none of the applied references would have taught changing the pattern of the streamers of the plasma lamp based on a detected predetermined condition. Claims 32 and 34 further call for a third electrode to provide a different mode of plasma lamp operation. As the applied references are completely silent regarding specific control of the electrodes to provide different plasma lighting effects, applicants submit that claim 28 clearly distinguishes over the applied references within the meaning of § 103.

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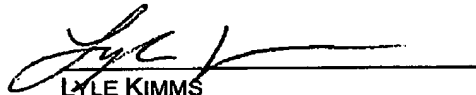
Conclusion

Applicants submit that the pending claims patentably distinguish over the applied references and are in condition for allowance. Should the examiner have any issues concerning this reply or any other outstanding issues remaining in this application, applicants urge the examiner to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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14 MARCH 2006
DATE



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